



PARENT *handout*

Exploring Music: Ways to Have Fun With Your Child

Your child started moving to music before she could even sit up. And now she can dance! Children show their enjoyment with their whole bodies. It's fun – and it's good for their brains.

Your child may not be able to carry a tune, but she does have a singing voice. You will probably hear her singing to herself and making up new songs and words. Repeating words this way helps her learn to understand and speak them.

Introduce patterns and sequence

Music exposes your child to patterns of notes and beat. There is a clear

sequence to a melody, and repetition reinforces the order of the notes.

Lyrics also teach your child about patterns. When she was very young she knew when to chime in with E-I-E-I-O on *Old McDonald Had a Farm*.

Teach patterning to your child by playing follow-the-leader games with sounds and rhythm. Clap a simple pattern of long and short beats. Repeat it several times, then ask your child to imitate it.

You can also make a pattern of movements. Put on some catchy music and repeat a pattern such as: hands on knees, flap arms in the air, touch your nose. After your child has learned the pattern, stop partway through and ask, "What comes next?" You are teaching your child to predict and anticipate events.

Spotlight on music and development

Music helps your child's brain develop in many ways. You have probably already heard it help her talk. It can also help her thinking skills. Your child may remember things more easily when they are set to music. Just think: We all know the ABC song! Teach her songs about counting, colors, and letters.

> Sensory stimulation

Music involves hearing, seeing, feeling, touching, and moving. It makes your child want to get active! When your child moves while learning, she is more likely to remember.

> Patterns and sequence

The repetition in melody and lyrics helps identify patterns, an early skill for reading, math, and memory. Rhythm and melody help your child anticipate what comes next.

> Social interaction

Singing together is a cooperative activity. Your child learns to make eye contact, take the lead, follow directions, and enjoy herself. It also helps her express her own talents and interests, creating a sense of self-worth.

Music often helps toddlers change their mood. Slow music can calm toddlers who are excited or upset. Fast music can get them up and moving.

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Musical activities to do together

While your child probably listens to plugged-in entertainment like the radio and CDs, it is best for her brain when you experience music together. It also strengthens the attachment between you.

Don't feel shy about singing or playing music with your child. Your voice will please her because you are the most important person in her life.

- > **Memorize songs.** Repeat them again and again. Your child will enjoy hearing familiar tunes and will learn to sing along. You can change the tempo or beat based on the time of day or your child's mood. The same song can have a very different feel depending on how fast you sing it and your tone of voice.

- > **Piggyback.** Build on a familiar tune by using your own words. This can be a great way to prepare your child for transitions. If you're getting into the car, make up words to a tune like *The Farmer in the Dell*: "We're going for a ride! We're going for a ride! Open the door and climb inside, we're going for a ride!"
- > **Dance.** Teach your child movements: jump, spin, hop, kick, tiptoe, and shake. Use songs like *The Hokey Pokey* to encourage her to stop one movement and start another.

- > **Listen to music.** Play child-friendly songs of all types: pop, classical, R&B, rock. She will appreciate the diversity of sounds. Also teach your child songs from your family's culture. This will help her gain an identity.
- > **Interact.** Pause and let your child fill in a word in a favorite song. Let your child add the next action in songs like *The Wheels on the Bus*. Combine music and motion.